

MINNESOTA'S PROMISE: WORLD-CLASS SCHOOLS, WORLD-CLASS STATE

MINNESOTA AT THE CROSSROADS

THREE DIRECTIONS TO THE FUTURE

Public education in Minnesota is at crossroads. In one direction, the road continues down the path we are already on, sustaining the strategies and structures that have made Minnesota an educational leader within the United States.

In a second direction, the road departs from the status quo and heads toward change, but splinters off into many different pathways that lead to many different destinations.

In a third direction, the road also heads toward change, but it does not diverge in different directions. Instead, it leads to a single destination that is dramatically different from the place where the journey began.

Minnesota's Promise seeks to put public education in our state on the third road, down which our state's diverse communities can travel together toward far-reaching and fundamental educational change. In order to understand the promise of Minnesota's Promise, it is important to understand why the other two roads would take our state and our students in the wrong direction.

The road that continues toward the status quo would be a more comfortable one to travel at the outset, leading the traveler through large but familiar obstacles such as inadequate funding and changes in tests and textbooks. But not far ahead, the first road becomes impassable to all but the strongest of travelers. Two powerful winds of change stop and eventually reverse the forward momentum of the many Minnesotans who had hoped to travel this road to educational success.

The first of those winds of change is the emergence of the global Information Age, in which all citizens must possess high-level knowledge and skills to earn a living wage and to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities that are available to well-educated Americans today. The trend of globalization is being driven by ongoing political, economic and technological changes that are making it not only possible but probable that Minnesota businesses will concentrate jobs and investments wherever high-skill workers can be found at the lowest costs across the globe.

The second wind of change that is blowing against the status quo in Minnesota is demographic. In school districts of every size and in every region, the percentage of pupils who are students of color, whose first language is not English and who lives in poverty is increasing. As a result, educators who trained for careers working with students from familiar family backgrounds are being blown off course by winds of change that are literally reshaping the face of public education our state.

Taken together, these two winds of change – globalization and demographic transformation – threaten to combine and create a perfect storm for Minnesota in the

years ahead.¹ At a time when our state's prosperity depends more than ever before on the educational attainment of its citizens, the fastest growing segments of our population are the ones that currently enjoy the lowest rates of success in Minnesota's schools.

Back at the crossroads facing public education in our state, a second road leads away from the status quo and towards meaningful change, but that road quickly splinters into many different paths to the goal. Some of those paths will reach their hoped-for destination, but others will double back to converge with the status quo. Still others will branch off in directions that collide with other roads that lead toward change, but that head in opposite directions.

A third and final road at the crossroads also leads toward change, but it would take our state in a direction that is fundamentally different from both of the other roads. On the third road, change at all levels would be coordinated, and a shared vision would lead the diverse participants in Minnesota's educational system — the state, school districts (including boards), schools, institutions of higher education, communities, families and the students themselves — toward a common destination.

The signposts that guide traffic along this third road to educational improvement would be:

- **Coherence**: Too often today, initiatives to strengthen education that originate at one level of the system – such as the state legislature or the local school district – are not aligned with what happens at other levels, such as schools or postsecondary institutions. As a result, organizational energy is spent duplicating and even resisting work that already has been – or should have been – done at another level. In contrast, on the third road a more efficient and effective division of labor exists among the various actors in Minnesota's educational system that ensures that what happens at one level supports and is reinforced by what happens at others.
- **Comprehensiveness**: Also too often today, Minnesota's educational improvement efforts have focused on one dimension of complex problems that actually require multifaceted solutions. In contrast, the third road takes us toward a comprehensive approach to student success, linking what happens in the classroom not only to what happens in the principal's office, but also to what happens in the home and in the community.
- **Commitment**: Although producing sustained gains in student achievement requires sustained and serious implementation of reform, too often today we change direction with every change in political and organizational leadership. As a result, not only do the previous reforms fail to produce hoped-for gains, but the willingness of teachers and others to embrace other future reforms is also set back. This dynamic has led many educators to greet needed improvements with the understandable but ultimately unproductive perspective of, "*This too shall pass.*" In contrast, the third road articulates an agenda for change that can be

¹ For data and information on how the trends of globalization and demographic change are transforming the work of public education in Minnesota and across the United States, please visit the *Minnesota's Promise* web site at www.minnesotaspromise.org and the LearnMore Web site at www.learnmoremn.org.

embraced across the political and organizational divides and that will stand the test of time.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MODELS

To some Minnesotans reading this report, creating an educational system that reflects coherence, comprehensiveness and commitment might seem unlikely or even impossible. That is not surprising given the deep differences that exist in Minnesota today about how to strengthen public schools.

But if we want our students and our state to compete in the global Information Age, we must find a way to travel the third road of common vision and coordinated change. Over the past fifty years, the world's highest performing countries, such as Finland and Japan, and fast-improving countries such as Great Britain, have developed national educational improvement strategies that are characterized by coherence, comprehensiveness and long-term commitment.

Closer to home, in 1993 Massachusetts passed an Education Reform Act that has guided their state's improvement efforts through four Republican and one Democratic governors, as well as through leadership changes in the Democratically controlled state legislature. The guiding principle of Massachusetts' educational reforms has been setting high standards and expectations for all students. As a result of the state's sustained and systemic approach, Massachusetts is now the U.S. leader in student achievement. In 2005, for example, the state had the highest scaled scores in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (often referred to as the "nation's report card") in both reading and math and in both of the key benchmark grades, 4 and 8. It is the only U.S. state that has ever achieved that feat.

It is important to note that, like Minnesota, Massachusetts is a state where the percentage of students of color is rising rapidly, while the percentage of white students in the state has remained constant. But despite the challenge of integrating many new students from diverse backgrounds into its schools, in recent years Massachusetts has also made significant progress in reducing achievement gaps between white students and students of color.²

THE ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF MINNESOTA'S PROMISE

Over two years of dialog and deliberation, the individual and organizational partners listed on this report have come to the conclusion that Minnesota must develop a comprehensive strategy for improving public education that borrows from best practices across the United States and the world. We believe that developing and implementing such a strategy is the only way we will be able to close two gaping achievement gaps that

² For more information on Massachusetts' educational journey of the last fifteen years and on high performing nations across the globe, please visit the *Minnesota's Promise* web site at www.minnesotaspromise.org.

threaten our future: gaps between our students and their peers in the highest performing countries in the world, and gaps between demographic groups here at home.

The conversations that led us to this point of agreement began in 2005, when twenty-seven past and present superintendents of schools came together to share strategies and build relationships across rural, urban and suburban lines. Their work over the course of more than a year together was supported by the Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi Foundation, and it resulted in an initial draft of this report. During the 2006-2007 school year and into the fall of 2007, the superintendents partnered with the University of Minnesota to launch a year-long series of conversations about their ideas. Those conversations with diverse supporters of public education in Minnesota took place at both large summits and in small group meetings. Significant changes were made in the *Minnesota's Promise* framework along the way.

This report summarizes the results of that multi-dimensional stakeholder input process. Altogether, more than five hundred people contributed to its contents through participation in carefully structured sessions at which ideas were generated, clarified, discussed and prioritized. Many more participated in less formal discussions that superintendents convened in their local communities across the state.

From among the hundreds of ideas that were generated through the *Minnesota's Promise* process, ten overarching strategies emerged:

- Strategy 1: Invest early in educational success
- Strategy 2: Ensure that all academic roads are rigorous and lead to higher education
- Strategy 3: Recruit, prepare, support and retain great educators
- Strategy 4: Embrace our multicultural future – locally and globally
- Strategy 5: Engage families and communities as full partners in education
- Strategy 6: Use data and research to improve teaching and learning everyday
- Strategy 7: Shape time to meet the needs of learning, rather than shaping learning to meet the constraints of time
- Strategy 8: Provide services for students with special needs that are proactive, effective, efficient and adequately funded
- Strategy 9: Provide schools with funding that is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance
- Strategy 10: Ensure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn

The partners in *Minnesota's Promise* believe that these ten strategies should serve as the basis of the comprehensive educational reform effort that our state must launch if it is to remain a world-class competitor in the global Information Age. The partners have also agreed that every participant and stakeholder in Minnesota's preK-12 educational system

has an indispensable role to play in implementing each of these ten strategies. The **State of Minnesota**, for example, is the only level in Minnesota’s educational architecture that has the authority and responsibility to set statewide standards, and to hold schools, districts and students accountable for reaching those standards. In addition, the State leads the interaction with federal government requirements and funding. **School districts and organizations that sponsor public charter schools**, including their school boards, also have an indispensable role to play, integrating community values and priorities into student learning, and strengthening the capacity of schools to meet and exceed state standards. At the **school** level, the challenge is to balance high challenge with high support, expecting the most of every learner while also weaving safety nets that catch students before they fall between the academic cracks. **Families and communities** must give students positive and persistent direction on their paths through school, and continuously connect what students do outside of school to the learning that takes place inside the classroom. **Educational associations** such as unions and non-profit organizations must advocate for improvements that enhance the ability of their members and supporters to help all students master high-level knowledge and skills. And while *Minnesota’s Promise* has focused on strengthening preK-12 education, **postsecondary institutions** have an indispensable role to play in this project as well, conducting research that identifies educational best practices and helping preK-12 educators align curriculum and instruction with the knowledge and skills for postsecondary success.

The charts on the following pages illustrate the role that each level of Minnesota’s educational system must play if we are to realize the objectives of *Minnesota’s Promise*. In many cases, the charts identify more than one option for change. For example, under the first strategy of *Minnesota’s Promise* – Invest Early in Educational Success – funding preschool programs for three and four-year olds who live in poverty is identified as an option, but so is funding all-day kindergarten for all students. Given limited resources, it may not be possible to take both steps forward at the same time. As a result, the question facing decision makers who want to move toward the new vision for public education outlined in *Minnesota’s Promise* is this: *where do we begin?*

In their book, [Teaching the New Basic Skills](#), economists Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy provide a useful answer to that question:

The best answer to this problem comes from the writings of political economist Albert O. Hirschman. Writing about strategies for economic development in the 1950s, Hirschman developed a key insight about “getting from here to there.” In those years, the prevailing wisdom was that balanced growth was the most effective economic development strategy for a poor country. Balanced growth meant moving on all fronts at once: raising financing for new factories, building roads so the new factories could easily move raw materials and finished products, establishing schools to train labor for the new factories, and so on. The idea of balance—avoiding bottlenecks—sounded wonderful, but it required herculean coordination effort well beyond the capability of most governments.

Hirschman’s advice was to attack the development problem quite differently. Instead of trying to make progress on all fronts

simultaneously, start with the initiative that creates the most pressure for other constructive changes. For example, if the government concentrated on raising funds for new factories, the owners of the new factories would create pressures to build the most-needed roads and to develop the most essential training programs.

Hirschman's logic applies equally well to a strategy for school improvement.³

And so, for each of the ten strategies of *Minnesota's Promise*, we have sought to identify levers of change that, if skillfully pushed, would move us toward the broader vision. Rather than listing *all* of the important functions that the State, districts, schools, families and communities, education organizations and postsecondary institutions must play to implement each of the ten strategies of *Minnesota's Promise*, we have instead identified a limited number of initiatives that will create momentum and pressure for other constructive changes down the road. If we collectively push these levers in the years ahead, we believe that public education in Minnesota will begin to function less as a loose collection of schools, districts and organizations and more as the world-class system that our state needs and our students deserve.

³ Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy, Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy, New York: The Free Press, 1996, pp. 224-225.

STRATEGY 1:

INVEST EARLY IN EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentages of students in all subgroups and the state as a whole who enter first grade with the knowledge, skills and habits to meet grade-level standards and expectations

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Start Students Out Right</u>: Support early screening and quality child care for children between ages birth to three who live in poverty2. <u>Begin Funding Before K</u>: Fund high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for 3 and 4 year-olds who live in poverty and face other educational challenges3. <u>Offer All-Day K Everywhere</u>: Fund all-day kindergarten programs for all students4. <u>Implement Quality Control</u>: Disseminate the characteristics of and hold providers accountable for offering high-quality early childhood services5. <u>Ensure That All Have Access</u>: Connect the dots between major providers of early education and child care services (such as Head Start, ECFE and private preschool and daycare centers) to ensure that all children have access to services and that duplication of effort is minimized6. <u>Collect and Disseminate Data</u>: Create data systems that proactively identify children who would benefit from early childhood services and that measure their progress toward school readiness over time
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Conduct Early Outreach</u>: Reach out to parents in the community starting before or at birth to help them understand the factors that prepare students for academic success2. <u>Establish Safeguards</u>: Advocate for and help to create a safety net of early childhood programs for students who live in poverty and face other educational challenges3. <u>Provide Professional Development</u>: Conduct high-quality professional development for diverse public and private early childhood providers who serve children who live in the district

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Prepare for the Transition to Kindergarten</u>: Work with parents and child care providers to align expectations for the transition to kindergarten 5. <u>Sustain Early Gains</u>: Consider the adoption of an “Age 3 to Grade 3” model to sustain the benefits of early childhood education. For more information, visit www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/PK-3WhatIsItandHowDoWeKnow.pdf.
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Align Early and Elementary Education</u>: Align what students learn in early childhood classes with the knowledge, skills and habits for success in elementary school 2. <u>Co-Locate Programs</u>: Wherever possible, co-locate early childhood and early elementary programs in the same building or in close proximity
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Start Teaching at Birth</u>: Serve as children’s first – and often best – teachers of early reading and other important early learning skills 2. <u>Emphasize Education</u>: Continually communicate the importance of children’s early learning to their later success in school and life 3. <u>Reach Beyond Schools</u>: Provide families who participate in early childhood programs with access to comprehensive family services, from job placement assistance to health care
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Build Support</u>: Create political and organizational support for implementing high-quality programs and taking them to scale across the state 2. <u>Identify What Works</u>: Conduct and disseminate research on effective early childhood practices 3. <u>Provide Training</u>: Create a common core curriculum for the preparation and development of early childhood providers

STRATEGY 2:

**ENSURE THAT ALL ACADEMIC ROADS ARE RIGOROUS
AND LEAD TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentage of students in all subgroups and the state as a whole who earn postsecondary credentials and degrees after high school graduation

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
ALL LEVELS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Raise Expectations</u>: Constantly communicate high expectations for every student in clear and compelling terms, stressing that <i>all</i> students can and should master challenging material and go on to complete postsecondary credentials or degrees 2. <u>Tap the Power of Technology</u>: Integrate information technology into teaching and learning within schools to both personalize and globalize education. In addition, expand online distance learning to enable students to master high-level knowledge and skills anytime and anyplace.
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Strengthen Standards</u>: Integrate college and workforce readiness standards into Minnesota’s K-12 academic standards to ensure that all students are prepared for higher education and high-skill employment after high school 2. <u>Invest in Leadership</u>: Create high-quality state-wide leadership development programs for teacher leaders, principals, superintendents and educators in other important positions to enhance their ability help all students reach high standards. 3. <u>Finance Postsecondary Education</u>: Increase state funding for scholarships and loans to ensure that qualified low and moderate-income students can afford postsecondary education.
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Develop a Strategy for 21st Century Skills</u>: In addition to helping all students meet and exceed state academic content standards, develop a district-wide strategy for integrating “21st Century skills” such as critical thinking, creativity and collaboration into curriculum and instruction throughout the district. For example, see the Partnership for 21st Century Skills at www.21stcenturyskills.org. 2. <u>Ensure Access</u>: Work with postsecondary institutions,

	community-based organizations and others to ensure that all students have the support they need to investigate and gain admission to and financial aid at an institution of higher education
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Broaden the Pathway</u>: Implement programs and efforts to increase the number and percentage of students of color and English Language Learners who take and succeed in the school’s most challenging coursework. 2. <u>Create Safety Nets</u>: Provide effective safety nets for students who need more time and different educational strategies to develop high-level knowledge and skills 3. <u>Raise the Floor</u>: Eliminate any academic “low roads” that do not help students develop high-level knowledge and skills and prepare for some type of postsecondary education 4. <u>Support Planning and Guidance</u>: Utilize counselors, mentors and technology to help students develop and implement plans that lead to success in postsecondary education and high-skill careers.
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Motivate and Encourage</u>: Publicly recognize and celebrate students’ academic effort and success, and continually communicate that all young people are expected to prepare for and complete some type of postsecondary education 2. <u>Choose Challenge</u>: Place students in or help them choose a challenging course of study that meets their academic needs, builds on their interests and takes advantage of their learning styles. 3. <u>Provide Support</u>: Launch tutoring, mentoring, college access and other types of programs to assist students with challenging academic material and preparing for postsecondary education
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Align Standards</u>: Continually work with the State to integrate postsecondary readiness standards into K-12 academic standards. 2. <u>Align Requirements</u>: Work with the State and districts to align K-12 standards and assessments with postsecondary entrance and course placement requirements 3. <u>Offer Incentives</u>: Work with districts, schools and community organizations to help students understand the importance of postsecondary education and what they should do to prepare for it. 4. <u>Strengthen Financial Support</u>: Increase and more carefully target financial aid to ensure that family income is not a barrier to

	enrollment in and completion of postsecondary education.
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STRATEGY 3:

RECRUIT, PREPARE, SUPPORT AND RETAIN GREAT EDUCATORS

CRITICAL MEASURES: The percentages of teachers and principals who graduated in the top 1/3 of their college classes, and the percentages of teachers and administrators who reflect the cultural diversity of the schools and districts in which they teach

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Recruit the Best</u>: Implement a creative and highly visible campaign to recruit talented people into teaching and administration, especially people of color and people with expertise in subject areas and who live in regions of the state where shortages exist 2. <u>Develop Leaders</u>: Utilize national and international best practices and leverage statewide economies of scale to strengthen the capacity of principals, teacher leaders, superintendents and school boards to provide all students with the knowledge, skills and habits for success in postsecondary education and the global economy. 3. <u>Establish Incentives</u>: Establish incentives and supports to attract educators to high-need schools and subject areas.
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Enhance Induction</u>: Implement high-quality induction programs that provide new teachers with intensive support during their first years in the classrooms 2. <u>Grow Your Own</u>: Design and implement leadership development programs for new or future principals to prepare them to help lead the district's improvement strategy 3. <u>Create Career Ladders</u>: Implement career ladders and other structures that provide educators with opportunities for new challenges and greater responsibility without leaving classrooms or schools 4. <u>Empower School Leaders</u>: Provide principals and charter school directors with the authority and autonomy they need to develop school faculties, educational programs and budgets that meet the particular needs of their schools and communities.
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Strengthen Schools as Workplaces</u>: Improve retention by measuring, monitoring and continuously improving the

	<p>professionalism of the school’s work environment, including providing teachers with common planning periods and the ability to observe other teachers’ instruction on a regular basis.</p> <p>2. <u>Provide Professional Development</u>: Integrate ongoing professional development that is collaborative, focused on academic content and data-driven into the everyday jobs of teachers, administrators and other school staff.</p>
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<p>1. <u>Celebrate Educators</u>: Launch a community-based effort to recruit people of color, people whose first language is not English and people from other underrepresented groups into the teaching profession</p>
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<p>1. <u>Build the Profession</u>: Create programs and incentives for talented undergraduates and mid-career professionals to prepare for and enter teaching and administration, especially people from underrepresented backgrounds and who work in shortage fields and geographic areas</p> <p>2. <u>Connect Preparation to Practice</u>: More closely align teacher and administrator preparation programs with district and school priorities and changing student needs</p> <p>3. <u>Continuously Develop Leaders and Practitioners</u>: Provide intensive leadership development programs for practicing principals, superintendents, teacher leaders and other educators, and along with the school or district, provide coaching to assure effective application in the classroom</p>

STRATEGY 4:

EMBRACE OUR MULTICULTURAL FUTURE – LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentage of teachers and administrators who report that they feel well-prepared to provide students from diverse cultural backgrounds with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a global economy and society

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Teach Cultural History:</u> Develop and disseminate model curricula that summarize the history, experiences and accomplishments of the largest and the fastest growing cultural groups in Minnesota 2. <u>Require and Support Language Study:</u> Add the study of a language other than English to Minnesota’s high school graduation requirements and require all students to demonstrate at least intermediate-level proficiency in that language as determined by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). 3. <u>Promote Global Awareness:</u> Ensure that Minnesota’s K-12 academic standards provide all students with an understanding of the process of globalization and major trends in the world today. 4. <u>Benchmark Globally:</u> Promote, administer and fund the participation of Minnesota students in international assessments that measure students’ knowledge and skills against their peers in other countries.
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Enhance and Ensure Educators’ Cultural Competence:</u> Provide staff with ongoing professional development in effective strategies for helping students from all cultural backgrounds succeed in school. 2. <u>Develop Curriculum:</u> Ensure that curricula in social studies and other subjects help students understand the concept of culture and value connections with cultures other than their own. 3. <u>Recruit Staff:</u> Recruit and work to retain educators whose cultural backgrounds reflect not only students in the district but the changing demographics of the entire state. 4. <u>Increase Language Offerings:</u> Develop a strategy for

	significantly increasing the number of students who study a foreign language and the number of languages being taught in the district
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Create an Inclusive Environment</u>: Implement strategies and structures that make the school a welcoming and engaging place for students, staff and families from all backgrounds 2. <u>Monitor Program Participation</u>: Regularly monitor and report the demographic breakdown of students in key school programs, such as Advanced Placement, Career and Technical Education and special education 3. <u>Emphasize Language Study</u>: Develop and implement a plan to dramatically expand the number and diversity of students studying a language other than English 4. <u>Start and Support Adult Learning</u>: Create professional learning communities among school staff to examine issues of race and culture that are relevant to the school's students and community
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Embrace Diversity as an Asset</u>: Help students understand that in the economy and society of the 21st century, working with and learning from people from diverse cultural backgrounds is a basic skill for professional and personal success.
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Recruit the Educators We Need</u>: Proactively promote education as a positive career choice, particularly for people of color and people who speak languages other than English. 2. <u>Integrate Culture Into Preparation</u>: Ensure that postsecondary programs for teachers and other educators include cultural competence as a core component of preparation. 3. <u>Provide Professional Development</u>: Develop professional development and technical assistance programs to help schools and districts respond positive to cultural change in their student population and communities

STRATEGY 5:
ENGAGE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
AS FULL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentages of parents and other caregivers from all backgrounds who actively participate in their children’s education through involvement in school and community-based programs and events and through engagement at home.

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
ALL LEVELS:	1. <u>Emphasize Assets:</u> Focus on and talk about the assets that families and communities bring to their students’ education, rather than on the deficits that must be overcome.
THE STATE:	<p>1. <u>Expand Parent Education:</u> Expand participation in parent education through increased funding for Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and other effective programs. Programs should be focused on and reach out parents whose children are likely to struggle in elementary school without early intervention and additional support. Culturally specific programs should be used where effective and appropriate.</p> <p>2. <u>Engage Employers:</u> Encourage and provide incentives for businesses to offer parent education as a service to employees and to support employees’ involvement in their children’s schools.</p> <p>3. <u>Support Informed Choice:</u> Design and implement systems that provide all parents with comprehensive, accurate and understandable information about schools that enhances their ability to select a school that best meets their child’s needs.</p>
THE DISTRICT:	1. <u>Build the Infrastructure for Choice:</u> Design school attendance boundaries and transportation systems that promote connections between home and school and provide all families in the district with informed and objective assistance in choosing schools for their children.
THE SCHOOL:	1. <u>Open the Doors of Leadership:</u> Involve parents and community members in school decision making through site councils, Parent-Teacher Associations and other formal and informal structures. Proactively work to involve parents and community

	<p>members from many backgrounds in these structures.</p> <p>2. <u>Inform Parents</u>: Proactively provide parents with understandable explanations of what their child is doing in school accompanied by activities that the parent can do with the child to reinforce and extend learning.</p>
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<p>1. <u>Create Learning Communities</u>: Establish partnerships among schools, businesses, libraries, parks, cultural and recreational centers, clinics and other organizations to create safe places where families can come together as communities</p> <p>2. <u>Get Involved in School Improvement</u>: Support school improvement through active involvement in school initiatives, and also through support for referendums and other financial supports.</p>
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<p>1. <u>Conduct and Disseminate Research</u>: Evaluate effective ways to engage families and communities in helping students succeed in school.</p> <p>2. <u>Build Partnerships</u>: Develop partnerships between postsecondary institutions and communities that put in place multidisciplinary strategies for promoting student success.</p>

STRATEGY 6:
USE DATA AND RESEARCH
TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING EVERYDAY

CRITICAL MEASURE: Implementation and degree of use of a state-wide data and assessment system that measures the growth that individual students make over time and that informs instructional improvement at multiple levels

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Redesign State Tests</u>: Redesign state assessments to measure the achievement growth that the same students make over time rather than comparing the performance of successive cohorts of students. The performance expectation should be at least one year of growth for every year that students spend in the same school – and significantly more than that if students start out behind. In addition, the next generation of state tests in Minnesota should better measure “21st century skills” such as such as critical thinking, creativity and collaboration and should provide teachers and others with information that can be used to improve classroom instruction. 2. <u>Design a Data Repository</u>: Create a powerful data warehouse of information on student performance from early childhood through higher education that authorized users can access to conduct analyses that identify effective and ineffective practices and strategies. At an appropriate level of detail, key components of this information should also be made available to the public. 3. <u>Promote Benchmarking</u>: Identify schools and systems that are reaching high levels of performance for some or all students and create opportunities for other schools and systems to benchmark their practices against high performers in Minnesota, across the U.S. and around the world. 4. <u>Spark and Support Innovation</u>: Support research and development efforts that identify new strategies for helping all students master challenging academic content
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Develop Holistic Measures</u>: Develop ways to monitor school and system quality that assess non-achievement factors that influence academic success, such as student engagement and the effectiveness of instruction 2. <u>Draw Connections</u>: Help schools and community stakeholders

	<p>reach well-informed conclusions by correlating different sets of data, such as student achievement and attendance rates.</p> <p>3. <u>Monitor Trends</u>: Help schools and community stakeholders prepare for future student needs, such as shifts in the size and demographic composition of student enrollment</p>
THE SCHOOL:	<p>1. <u>Make Data-Driven Decisions</u>: To the greatest extent possible, base all decisions – from classroom instruction to school-wide staffing levels – on the school’s own data or national and international research</p> <p>2. <u>Implement Frequent Assessments</u>: Work with school districts, the state, corporations and others to administer short, classroom-based assessments that provide teachers with information they can use to strengthen</p>
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<p>1. <u>Become Informed and Frequent Consumers</u>: Use data and research to identify what works in education today, rather than searching or advocating for practices that were effective in the past.</p>
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<p>1. <u>Conduct Research</u>: Design and implement studies that measure and evaluate the effectiveness of Minnesota’s educational system at every level.</p> <p>2. <u>Provide Professional Development</u>: Continually strengthen the capacity of educators and key stakeholders to use data and research to raise the achievement of all students</p>

STRATEGY 7:

SHAPE TIME TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LEARNING, RATHER THAN SHAPING LEARNING TO MEET THE CONSTRAINTS OF TIME

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentage of Minnesota students who spend as much time in school as their peers in the world’s highest performing nations

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Lengthen the School Year</u>: Provide funding for and increase the length of the school year to reflect best practices in other developed countries 2. <u>Emphasize Outcomes</u>: Ensure that state standards and credit requirements are based upon student mastery of knowledge and skills, rather than time spent in particular courses or grade levels
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Lengthen the School Day</u>: Increase the length of the school day, especially for students who are struggling academically 2. <u>Experiment</u>: Promote and support efforts to experiment with alternative school calendars and schedules, such as the 45-15 calendar in which four quarters (45 days) of uninterrupted instruction are followed by a 15-day break during which academic enrichment and support is provided. 3. <u>Provide Professional Development</u>: Help teachers adjust instruction to maximize time spent on academic content, especially critical concepts
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Restructure the School Day</u>: Provide students who need it with additional time to master important academic content 2. <u>Connect with Families and Community</u>: Extend learning time by helping families and community organizations engage students in challenging learning experiences 3. <u>Reduce Distractions</u>: Reduce time in school that is not spent on academic content, such as time spent out of class due to discipline referrals or in class listening to public address announcements
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Advocate for More Time in School!</u>: Encourage state, district and school leaders to increase the amount of time to increase time for student learning, especially for students who are

	<p>struggling academically</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Make School Priority #1</u>: To the greatest extent possible, ensure that young people’s lives are focused on success in school, rather than employment or other priorities 3. <u>Extend the Day and Year</u>: Provide educational services for students after school and during the summer that help students meet and exceed academic standards and expectations
<p>EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Conduct Research</u>: Investigate and disseminate the affects of alternative school schedules and calendars.

STRATEGY 8:

PROVIDE SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS THAT ARE PROACTIVE, EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND ADEQUATELY FUNDED

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentage of students with disabilities in all subgroups who meet and exceed state academic standards.

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Emphasize Outcomes, Not Processes</u>: Require schools and districts to help students with disabilities meet and exceed state standards, but do not mandate particular service delivery models 2. <u>Develop and Implement a New Approach to Funding</u>: Develop and implement a system of funding special education that fully covers the cost of mandated services and that, in so doing, eliminates the need to reallocate general education funding to subsidize special education programs 3. <u>Share Best Practices</u>: Research and disseminate strategies for providing special education services in Minnesota that produce significant gains in student achievement 4. <u>Streamline Paperwork</u>: Reduce the time and resources that schools and districts must devote to paperwork and compliance rather than work with students. 5. <u>Advocate at the Federal Level</u>: Work with Minnesota’s congressional delegation and other stakeholders to encourage the federal government to increase funding for special education services required by federal law.
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Build Capacity</u>: Provide all staff with guidance and professional development that help them implement practices in serving students with disabilities 2. <u>Recruit and Assign the Best</u>: Ensure that students with disabilities are taught by highly effective and experienced teachers, rather than younger staff who are new to the profession 3. <u>Set Goals and Measure</u>: In addition to monitoring and reporting schools’ progress toward the achievement targets required by No Child Left Behind, set targets for educating students with disabilities that emphasize the growth in learning that those students make over time.

	4. <u>Carefully Manage Medical Solutions</u> : Ensure that the use of medication to manage disabilities is consistent with professional best practices and the long-term interests of the student
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Make Mainstreaming the Norm</u>: Integrate students with disabilities into mainstream classes and programs whenever possible 2. <u>Discontinue Services When Goals are Achieved</u>: Just as medical treatment is discontinued when a patient is cured, ensure that special education services are discontinued if the objectives of a student's Individual Education Plan have been met. 3. <u>Intervene Early</u>: Monitor student progress and provide early interventions that reduce or eliminate students' later need for special education services
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Expect Academic Success</u>: Set high expectations for the academic success of students with disabilities 2. <u>Advocate for Access to Best Practices</u>: Work with schools and districts to ensure that students with disabilities receive special education services that have produced sustained gains in student achievement 3. <u>Permit Flexibility</u> : Work with school staff to tailor education to the unique needs of each learner, rather than requiring schools to take a narrow, compliance-based approach to serving students with disabilities
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Research</u>: Identify educational best practices for serving students with special needs. 2. <u>Communicate</u>: Aggressively disseminate research and best practices across the state.

STRATEGY 9:

PROVIDE SCHOOLS WITH FUNDING THAT IS PREDICTABLE AND SUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE

CRITICAL MEASURE: The percentage of schools and school districts that rely on excess levy referendums to fund basic educational services.

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Define Adequacy</u>: Based upon research and stakeholder input, define the levels of school funding that are sufficient to help all students reach and exceed state academic standards. 2. <u>Develop a New Formula</u>: Design and implement a new school finance formula that provides schools with levels of funding that reflect the state’s new definition school finance adequacy and that temporarily cushions schools from funding losses when enrollment rapidly decreases. Review this new funding formula every five years to ensure that it continues to adequately fund all schools and students. 3. <u>Fund the Formula</u>: Allocate resources to schools and districts at levels that meet or exceed the state’s definition of financial adequacy. 4. <u>Provide Transparency and Stability</u>: Ensure that the allocation of state funding to schools is predictable to educators and understandable to citizens.
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Ensure Equity</u>: Allocate funds to school sites based upon the state’s definition of adequacy and upon the needs of all schools in the district 2. <u>Increase Capacity</u>: Provide professional development for school leaders that enhances their capacity to allocate resources in ways that help all students reach high academic standards 3. <u>Advance Accountability</u>: Hold schools and district offices accountable for the effective, efficient and appropriate use of public resources
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Emphasize Outcomes</u>: Allocate funding within the school community based on student needs rather than tradition or

	<p>standard educational practices.</p> <p>2. <u>See the Big Picture</u>: View staff salaries and staff time as the school’s primary financial resources, rather than as “fixed costs” that cannot be adjusted or reallocated</p>
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<p>1. <u>Participate in Decision Making</u>: Help to effectively allocate funding through participation on school site councils, district committees and other vehicles.</p> <p>2. <u>Advocate for All Students</u>: Help school and district leaders ensure that adequate resources are equitably allocated to serve all learners.</p>
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	<p>1. <u>Educate</u>: Help the public understand that, as Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has put it, “Education is the best investment,” and that reaching world-class levels of student performance requires adequate and stable levels of school funding.</p> <p>2. <u>Insist on Adequacy</u>: Work with school and district educators to hold the state accountable for providing schools with levels of funding that reflect the state’s definition of financial adequacy.</p>

STRATEGY 10:

**ENSURE THAT STUDENTS COME TO SCHOOL
PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY READY TO LEARN**

CRITICAL MEASURES: The percentages of students who are classified as obese, have diabetes, have health care coverage and receive mental health services.

LEVEL	LEVERS OF CHANGE
THE STATE:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Provide Health Care</u>: Support medical and dental coverage for all children who live in poverty 2. <u>Fund School Services</u>: Include funding for mental and physical health services in the state’s school finance model 3. <u>Disseminate Best Practices</u>: Help schools, districts and community organizations understand and implement best practices in supporting and improving students physical and mental health
THE DISTRICT:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Practice Good Nutrition</u>: Provide students with healthy meals and eliminate unhealthy options from vending machines 2. <u>Invest in Mental Health</u>: Maintain and increase funding for social workers, counselors and others who provide students with important mental health services
THE SCHOOL:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Connect with Families</u>: Consistently stress the importance of sending students to school well-fed, well-rested, feeling loved and ready to learn 2. <u>Sustain Physical Education</u>: Maintain and increase support for physical education classes that help students develop a positive lifelong approach to exercise, nutrition and other elements of health and wellness
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Support Students</u>: Ensure that students come to school well-fed, well-rested, feeling loved and ready to learn. 2. <u>Create Coalitions</u>: Build partnerships between schools, families, care providers, insurers, non-profit organizations, faith communities and government agencies to enhance students’ physical and mental wellbeing.
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Help Schools Connect the Dots</u>: Conduct research and outreach to help schools and districts link health and wellness services

AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:	available outside schools to services and supports within schools.
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MAKING AND KEEPING THE PROMISE

At the end of his Prairie Home Companion monologue each week, radio host Garrison Keillor describes the town of Lake Wobegon as a place where, “All the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.”

In many respects, Keillor’s farewell phrase accurately captures the image that citizens of his native Minnesota have held of their children and their schools for many decades. By many measures, Minnesota has had good reason to celebrate its achievements relative to other U.S. states.

But in recent years, we have begun to acknowledge that being the best in the U.S. is not the only or even the primary standard we should strive for. There is little to suggest that all Minnesota’s children are “above average” when compared to their peers in other developed nations, and we have come to understand that the fastest-growing segments of our student population — students of color, students whose first language is not English, students with disabilities and students who live in poverty — are unprepared to succeed in the global economy and society in which they will live their lives.

The pivotal challenge we face in realizing the vision of *Minnesota’s Promise* is to recognize and act upon the fact that despite our state’s rapidly rising diversity, we are *all* Minnesotans, and we will ultimately sink or swim together in the global labor pools of the Information Age. Recent research that is highly relevant to Minnesota has demonstrated that increasing diversity initially brings greater tension and division – a phenomenon that can be found in many classrooms, schools and communities across our state today. But that same research has found that in the long-run, cultural diversity has powerful and positive economic and social benefits.⁴

And so our challenge in the years ahead is to help our fellow citizens and our students understand that what happens *there* matters *here* – whether “there” is International Falls or Worthington, and “here” is Cloquet or North Minneapolis. Only with a shared understanding that what happens in one Minnesota community matters to what happens in another will we be able to realize the vision of *Minnesota’s Promise*.

We chose the name *Minnesota’s Promise* for this project for two reasons. The first is that we believe that our young people represent the extraordinary promise of our state. If we – as generations of Minnesotans before us have done – do what it takes today to prepare them for the world of tomorrow, they will reward our efforts with ideas, inventions and industries that we can only imagine. The second reason we chose the name *Minnesota’s Promise* is because we must come to see our efforts to strengthen public education not only as the design and implementation of various policies and programs, but as a sacred promise to our children. It is a promise that we will not let them down, that we will put their long-term interests before the short-term ones that so often distract and divide us as adults.

⁴ See Robert Putnam, *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century* The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture, Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30 – No. 2, 2007

We hope that you will join us in making and keeping *Minnesota's Promise*, so that together we can create and sustain the world-class schools that will keep Minnesota a world-class state in the global Information Age that is our children's future.

PARTNERS IN MINNESOTA'S PROMISE

As Partners in Minnesota's Promise, we have agreed to work toward the ten strategies of Minnesota's Promise both within our organizations and together across the state as a whole.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Alliance for Student Achievement

Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD)

Education Minnesota

Greater Twin Cities United Way

Minnesota Administrators of Special Education (MASE)

Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)

Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)

Minnesota Campus Compact

Minnesota Community Education Association (MCEA)

Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)

Minnesota International Center

Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP)

Minnesota Private College Council (MPCC)

Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA)

Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)

Parents United for Public Schools

Ready 4 K

Schools for Equity in Education (SEE)

University of Minnesota:

Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC)

College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)

Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success

Working Family Resource Center